

Frank B. Ford
GREENE STREET ARTISTS' BUILDING
5225 Greene Street
Philadelphia, PA 19144-2927
(215) 848-7345

The Present

"Vot a lucky boy! The birthday boy!"

"You never mind who's a lucky boy or who's not a lucky boy!" his grandfather informed the old man. He wondered how this tattered bum knew about his birthday. Then his grandfather announced: "This is who Gramps told you about! My present!" immediately beating the other man around the head and shoulders. "You too!" he screamed. "Smack him good!"

The boy whaled away, but only could reach midway up the black overcoat, which gave like dry grass, coming unbuttoned as he pounded. He scraped across a greenish brass belt buckle and quit. The grandfather persisted until out of breath, then stuck a ten dollar bill in the other old man's overcoat pocket.

With the boy watching from the window, the old man

stagged down the porch stairs, pausing at the brilliant sidewalk to extract the money. The pocket came out with the bill, slowly disintegrating into a purple dust as the old man squinted.

Meanwhile the chortling and puffing Gramps was dancing, reliving in exaggerated form some of his punches.

"Grandfather, will there always be Nazis?"

"Yes!" Gramps windmilled, scarlet, "and always us here to bop them good!" He stopped, to place a bony hand on his shoulder. "But look," he panted, noticing the few dots of blood on the boy's frail knuckles, "let's patch that up. You know your father and mother."